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Repurposing Video Documentaries as Features of a Flipped-Classroom Approach to Community-Centered Development

Abstract

Online and off-site educational programming is increasingly incorporated by Extension educators to reach their clientele. Models such as the flipped classroom combine online content and in-person learning, allowing clients to both gain information and build peer learning communities. We demonstrate how video documentaries used in traditional tourism development programs were repurposed as preprogram, flipped-classroom learning materials to deliver content and extend the goals of community-centric programming. The flipped-classroom approach yielded learning and process outcomes and allowed educators to maximize time spent facilitating peer learning, client engagement, and community organizing.

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Introduction

Online educational programming options, including webinars, workshops, and conferencing, are increasingly being used by Extension educators to reach their clientele (Rich et al., 2011). Previous research has supported the use of online programming in Extension education, citing increased flexibility, lower costs, broader reach, and learning outcomes comparable to or better than those resulting from face-to-face learning (Dromgoole & Boleman, 2006; Futris, Adler-Baeder, & Dean, 2004; Gentry, Edgar, Graham, & Kirkpatrick, 2017; McCollum, 1997; Parker, 2009; Schulman & Sims, 1999). Models such as the flipped classroom combine online content materials and in-person learning. Flipped classrooms allow community stakeholders to gain content knowledge prior to face-to-face meetings, leaving more time at the meetings for active learning, including through facilitated in-depth discussions, content application, and peer-to-peer interaction (Burns & Schroeder, 2014; Herreid & Schiller, 2013).

The movement toward off-site content education dovetails with other trends in Extension education, including "community-centric" programming. Strong, Rowntree, Thurlow, and Raven (2015) argued that technological advances have redefined Extension's role in content delivery: Rather than be recipients of passive dissemination of information (information-centric programming), today's clients are more interested in being participants in peer learning and the development of communities. In community-centric programming,

educators facilitate information sharing and networking among stakeholders (Piaskowski, Weddell, Fuerst, Roberts, & Carpenter-Boggs, 2013), leveraging the learners' experiences through group discussions and case methods rather than lecture (Burns & Schroeder, 2014; Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2005; Ota, DiCarlo, Burts, Laird, & Gioe, 2006).

We provide an example of how video case studies documenting West Virginia tourism development were repurposed for use in a community-centric, flipped-classroom setting. Real-world examples and personal stories in the videos became tools for effective content delivery. Using such elements to facilitate learning also aligns with the goals and methods of community-centric programming. By repurposing the videos as flipped-classroom content, we incorporated community-centric programming techniques into preprogram learning materials, thus allowing peer learning and client engagement to be maximized during a face-to-face learning event. We demonstrate how participants applied themes from the documentaries to their own communities and how subsequent community-based collaboration has generated positive results.

Using Existing Educational Video Documentaries in a Community Setting to Promote Extension's Mission

Extension professionals recognize the importance of video and film as learning tools for community development. In the late 1990s, Oregon State University Extension Service produced the "Towns in Transition" video to encourage dialogue and understanding of the challenges facing communities moving away from natural resources-dependent economies (Conway, Corcoran, Duncan, & Ketchum, 1997). The University of Minnesota's "Weaving Tourism into Communities" offering further extended this approach by identifying commonalities and differences in tourism-focused communities across the nation (Messer, 2010). With these examples in mind, faculty at West Virginia University (WVU) undertook a multiyear project documenting successes and challenges in tourism development in three rural West Virginia communities from the perspectives of local leaders. The resulting "Voices of Change" (available at <http://extension.wvu.edu/community-business-safety/tourism-hospitality/voices-of-change>) is a three-part video documentary series dedicated to these communities. To date, the documentaries have received more than 800 views and have been incorporated into traditional teaching events across the state.

In the spring of 2016, WVU Extension Service community resources and economic and development (CRED) educators, working with convention and visitors bureau (CVB) directors in three counties of the state's Eastern Panhandle organized a regional tourism summit. The summit's goal was to document activities occurring across segments of the region's cultural tourism industry, identify gaps in services and attractions, and develop strategies to fill the gaps. Sixty tourism development stakeholders participated. As the summit was only 1 day in length, attendees were asked to watch the three "Voices of Change" videos in preparation for the summit. Their "homework" was to critically reflect on particular aspects of the videos relating to core values in sustainable tourism development and to link case study content from the videos to their own community experiences.

At the start of the summit, county representatives presented a series of "discussion papers" based on the videos' themes and their communities' own challenges. These discussions demonstrated how content from the videos was made directly applicable to their communities and helped summit attendees understand how best practices presented in the videos are being demonstrated in their own communities. For example, summit attendees from one community explained how they were working to preserve historic properties to maintain a sense of place and provide a story visitors can take home. Others provided examples of how they linked small

assets to create a critical mass of community attractions. A representative from a local hotel described how hotel personnel engaged with visitors before, during, and after their visits to craft a quality experience. Finally, a CVB director discussed ways in which the organization made a conscious effort to engage new and diverse partners—not just tourism-focused businesses, but a diversity of community organizations, merchants, and local government entities.

The discussion papers generated by summit attendees demonstrate short-term learning outcomes. Specifically, participants gleaned best practices from the videos and applied them to their own situations. Additionally, the flipped-classroom approach provided more time for Extension educators to facilitate county-specific discussions and peer learning at the summit. In line with best practices presented in the videos, attendees assembled with representatives from their respective counties, identified assets and challenges, and considered strategies for linking assets across the region. Teams reported summaries of their deliberations, and attendees from other counties shared how they addressed similar challenges. Based on this collective feedback, the counties crafted strategies for addressing their challenges and better leveraging their tourism assets. A 6-month evaluation of the summit identified medium-term outcomes, including securing of additional resources, development of unified messages for tourism marketing materials, and additional county-specific forums that engaged county and state tourism leaders and legislators in ongoing efforts to manage destinations.

Conclusions

Flipped-classroom approaches provide an opportunity for Extension educators to maximize their time spent working alongside clients, leveraging their experiences and translating learning into action. "Voices of Change" and similar video case study documentaries highlight how communities are implementing best practices and deliver the information in a manner that is accessible, relatable, and possibly more entertaining and inspirational to the viewer than written case studies. Although the videos were designed as a traditional educational tool, their experience-driven format integrates the philosophy and client benefits of community-centric programming and works well as a medium for flipped-classroom content delivery. Content is reinforced when communities apply the lessons to their own experiences, and higher order outcomes can be achieved by using the freed time for community building, peer learning, and knowledge sharing. By reflecting on the research-based best practices and real-world voices presented in the videos, communities can draw from a breadth of ideas and strategies to address their unique challenges. Others in Extension may similarly benefit from repurposing existing, well-executed videos that have been successfully employed in more traditional ways as features of contemporary innovation in Extension programming.

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